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ANTIGONE

Θ1

ΟΤΤΟΙ ΣΤΝΕΧΘΕΙΝ ΑΛΛΑ
ΣΤΜΦΙΛΕΙΝ ΕΦΤΝ.

THE
ANTIGONE OF SOPHOCLES

TRANSLATED BY

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ANTIGONE.

PROLOGUE.

Enter ANTIGONE AND ISMENE.

ANTIGONE. Ismene, sister dear to me, dost know
That Zeus brings troubles sprung from Oedipus
To full fruition in our lives forlorn?
There is no grief, calamity, or shame
We have not seen and suffered—thou and I!
And now what talk is this among the folk
Of mandates newly given by our lord?
Hast thou not heard, or hear'st thou carelessly
How shames that fit our foes approach our friends?

ISMENE. To me, Antigone, no news of friends
In words of good or bad import has come
Since when we twain in death lost brothers twain
On one day killed, each by the other's hand;
Since, this last night, our Argive foes departed
No farther messages have come to me
Of how we fare in honor or disgrace.

ANTIGONE. I knew it well, and for that very cause
Have called thee here before the palace gates
That thou alone may'st hear the news I bring.

ISMENE. What news? Thou broodest darkly over it.

ANTIGONE. It is of our two brothers who are dead,—
How Creon honors one and not the other;
Eteocles, they say, he used with just
And righteous law, and buried him in earth
With honors to the spirits underground.
But as for him who died as woefully,

Our Polynices, people say King Creon
Has ordered no one to inter his body
Or make lament, but let him lie unburied,
Unmourned, as forage for the birds of prey
That look to him for their pleasure of repast.
Thus, have I heard it said, our noble Creon
Hath made decrees for thee and me—for me!
And hither soon will come with proclamations
To all who may not clearly understand.
No small offense is his who disobeys
For Creon says he shall be stoned to death.

'Tis thus: to-day thou provest thy descent,
Well-born,—or meanly sprung of noble stock.

ISMENE. If, daring sister, what thou say'st be true,

What can be gained by any act of mine

In cutting loose or binding fast Fate's threads?

ANTIGONE. Bethink thee! Wilt thou share my toils and deeds?

ISMENE. What hardihood is thine? What canst thou mean?

ANTIGONE. Wilt aid mine arm to lift our brother's corse?

ISMENE. To bury him?—forbidden by the State!

ANTIGONE. My brother I will bury, yea, and thine;

Though thou art hesitant, I shall be true!

ISMENE. Ah, reckless girl, though Creon doth forbid?

ANTIGONE. What right hath he to keep me from mine own?

ISMENE. Oh woe is me! Consider, sister, how

Our father, hated and inglorious, died,

Having himself, with self-destroying hand

For self-detected crimes, torn out his eyes;

And then his wife and—mother—two-fold name—

With the hanging twisted noose made way with life;

And third the brothers, two on one day slain,

A wretched pair, each by the other's hand,

Received their mortal wounds in mutual fate;

And now again we two alone shall see

How sadder yet we die if we transgress

Against the law, the might, and power of kings.

Think thou on this: we are but women born

Too weak to try hostilities with men;

We are subjected to our lords in power

And must obey yet harsher laws than these.

I therefore ask the gods below the earth
To pardon, since I am constrained in this
And bow my will to those who strut in power;
Attempting the impossible is loss!

ANTIGONE. I shall not urge thee—nay, if thou desiredst
I would no more accept of aid of thine.
Be—what thou wilt.—But I shall bury him!
When I have done my duty, sweet is death;
Loved I shall lie beside the one I love
In wicked righteousness, since longer lasts
Our service to the other world than this;
For there shall I rest ever. If thou pleasest
Dishonor what is honored of the Gods!

ISMENE. I do them no dishonor but was born too weak
To set myself against the powers of State.

ANTIGONE. Thou mayest make excuses. I shall go
To heap a mound for my beloved brother.

ISMENE. My daring sister, how I fear for thee!

ANTIGONE. Fear not for me; to thine own fate attend.

ISMENE. At least tell no one what thou art to do,
But keep thy secret hid, and so will I.

ANTIGONE. Nay, speak it forth! Thou art more hated still
If thou tell not my deed to all the world!

ISMENE. Thou hast a heated heart for chilling deeds.

ANTIGONE. I know I am pleasing whom 'tis best to please.

ISMENE. If thou art able. Hopeless is thy wish.

ANTIGONE. When hopeless I have found my wish—I cease.

ISMENE. Beginning the impossible is wrong.

ANTIGONE. While thus thou speakest hated be by me
And justly hated also by our dead.

But grant to me and all my foolish plans
To brave this deadly danger.—I can brave
No ignominy of inglorious death.

ISMENE. Pass to thy seeming duty, knowing this:
Thou'rt foolish—still unto thy loved ones loved!

[*Exeunt.*]

PARODOS.

Enter CHORUS.

STROPHE A.

CHORUS. Glow of the sunlight! fairest ray
 That ever shone on our Theban town!
 At length, O eye of the golden day,
 Over our streamlets gazing down,
 Thou startest the white-clad Argive knight
 With a tightening rein to a swifter flight
 Before thy sunshine beaming!
 Polynices' wrangling and quarrel and strife
 Had aroused him to menace our land and our life;
 With his arms he came and his horse-hair crest,
 Like an eagle with ripples of snow on his breast
 That over our land flies screaming.

ANTISTROPHE A.

Stood the monster with hungry maw
 Glaring down on our homes with pride,
 Circling our walls with spear-girt jaw,—
 But fled with desire unsatisfied,
 Dragon-foe that he was! His car
 Turned confused in the clash of war
 That round his rear came streaming.
 For our Zeus had his hate for their insolent boasts
 When he saw them o'er-mighty in on-marching hosts
 And with clanking of gold. His bolt he let fall
 In its blaze to consume the loud foe on the wall
 With an end to his victory-dreaming.

STROPHE B.

Struck by the flash to the earth he fell
 Who had borne the torch in mad affray,
 Frenzied, panting, fighting well,—

But Victory passed the other way,
 While the God of War, like a champion-steed,
 To men their different fates decreed.
 Before our seven gates arrayed
 Were seven captains matched in might
 Who left their arms, new trophies laid
 To Zeus, the god who sped their flight;—
 Save two poor brothers, mutual foes,
 Who dealt each other equal blows
 And found together death's repose.

ANTISTROPHE B.

But Victory now with her glorious train
 Comes joyfully greeting our Theban State.
 The wars are over! Forgotten the pain!
 Away to the shrines! On the gods let us wait!
 For Bacchus shall lead our revel along
 With the choral dance and the all-night song!—
 But stay;—for Creon, the king of the land
 By the recent lots of the gods decreed,
 Shall bring us the message that he hath planned;
 Since he called us here for his time of need
 Where the herald has hurried our aged pace,
 To know the counsel and grant the grace
 Of our lord in the public meeting-place.

FIRST EPISODE.

Enter CREON.

CREON. My counsellors, the State, long tossed by storms,
 The gods have made to ride secure again.
 I sent my messengers to summon you
 To meet me here, for well I knew that ye
 Of old were loyal unto Laius' throne,
 And afterwards, when Oedipus was king
 And when he fell in ruin, ye remained
 To champion his sons with faithful hearts.

Now since they two in one day met a death
Of two-fold fate, each slaying and each slain
In fratricidal crime, I hold the power
And throne as next in kinship to the dead.

Ye'll find it hard to learn in any man
His heart, his thought, his views, till he be tried
In actual ruling and in making laws.
To me the man who rules in any state
And does not cling to noblest purposes,
In coward, tongue-tied fear of any one,
Hath ever seemed—shall ever seem - most base!
Whoever counteth anything more dear
Than native-land, that man I hold as—naught!

Be Zeus my witness, who beholds us all,
That I shall never keep my peace when doom
Steals on our citizens in safety's stead.
Nor would I ever have for friend the man
That wrecks the Ship of State, since I am sure
Our safety is in her and while we tread
Her decks secure we win the friends we have.
Upon such principles I build my state;
And therefore voice my mandates unto Thebes
About the princes sprung from Oedipus:

Give burial to the Prince Eteocles
Who perished fighting for the commonwealth,
Heroic man! and pay the funeral gifts
Which follow heroes to the shades below;

For Polynices different my decree;
He came from exile with intent to burn
His ancestral gods and fatherland with fire
From top to base, with appetite to drink
The blood of kinsmen and enslave the State.
That traitor, I proclaim unto the town,
Shall lie unburied and unmourned in death!
Leave ye his corse uncovered, food for dogs
And carrion birds—a loathsome thing to see.

Such is my will, for never shall the bad
Receive from me the honors of the good,
But every loyal city-patriot

Shall have from me, in life and death, his dues.

CHORUS. It may seem best to thee, Menoeceus' son,
To honor one, the other put to shame.

And I suppose thy power is over all

The shades below as well as men above.

CREON. Then see that ye be guards of what was said.

CHORUS. Oh place that duty on some younger man.

CREON. No, no! already watchmen guard the corse.

CHORUS. What then this further charge thou dost enjoin?

CREON. Yield not to those who do not keep the law.

CHORUS. There's no one fool enough to want to die.

CREON. To die, yea, that's the pay; but often men
Are led astray by hopes of gain—and die.

Enter GUARD.

GUARD. I'll say my king, I am not breathless come

Because of speed or nimbleness of foot;

For many times I had to stop to think,

And wonder whether to go on or back;

And many times my conscience spake to me:

"Why go, thou wretch, to get thy punishment?"

And then: "Thou fool, why wait? For think,—if first
Some other man should tell the king thy news!

Ah then,—how then shouldst thou escape distress?"

With thoughts like these I came along in haste,—

Yet slow; and thus I made the short way long.

At length, the voice prevailed that said to come

To thee. And though I tell thee naught at all,

I'll tell it anyway; for I am come

In confidence and holding fast the hope

That I shall suffer nothing but my fate.

CREON. What's this that drives thy courage from thee so?

GUARD. Well, first, I want to speak about myself:

It wasn't I that did the deed, nor I

That saw who did it;—I deserve no harm.

CREON—Thou'rt aiming well and fencing back the crime

From off thyself. Thou surely hast some news.

GUARD. Yea; awful news is apt to cause reserve.

CREON. Unless thou'rt going to speak, be off, away!

GUARD. Yes, yes, I'll speak. Someone has buried the corpse,
And gone and covered it up with thirsty dust,
Attending to the needful sacred rites.

CREON. What's that thou say'st? What man hath dared the deed?

GUARD. Don't know: for there was not a sign of axe,
Nor earth upturned by mattocks, but the ground
Was hard and dry, unbroke, and not disturbed
By wheels. The doer left no trace behind.
And so the morning watchman showed to us
A sight of wonder and dismay to all.
The corpse was not entombed but only hid
With dust. It seemed the work of one in haste
And dread. No dog or beast had been that way
To tear the body, for no tracks appeared.

Abusive words are bandied to and fro,
While guard accuses guard, till blows would soon
Have come, with no one there to check the strife.
To each of us was charged this awful crime,
Yet none was sure; all knowledge each disclaimed,
And we were ready there to pass through fire,
To lay our hands on red hot brass
And swear, by all the gods, that we had not
A part in this base act by word or deed.
At last when questions brought no further light
There spoke among us one, who by his words
Compelled us all to bow our heads in fear.
We knew not what to answer, how to act.
His thought was this, that we must not from thee
Conceal the deed. This thought prevailed. The lot
Condemned myself to bring such pleasant news!
And I am here, against my will and choice.
For no one likes the messenger of ill.

CHORUS. O king, one question has disturbed my mind:
May not this burial be a work of gods?

CREON. Nay! Stop before ye fill me up with wrath
And show yourselves at once old men and fools.
Your words shall not be borne when they imply
That gods above have planned this burial.

Do ye believe that they have honored him
For any pious benefits he did,
Who came to bring disaster to his land,
To ruin temples and destroy the laws?
Do ye expect the gods to gratify
And bless a wicked man? It cannot be.
But those who dwell within my city's wall
For some time past have restless borne my sway,
And fierce, with covert shakings of their heads,
Disputed me. Nor do they bend their necks
Beneath my yoke. I know full well 'tis they
That have seduced by bribes the guilty ones.
For nothing worse in all the world is found
Than silver and the evil lust for gain.
'Tis this that ruins cities, drives a man
From home, corrupts the mind, perverts the best
Of men to basest deeds, and teaches all
To play the knave. All those who, loving gain,
Have wrought this crime, at last have brought themselves
Where they in pain shall expiate their guilt.
For, if from me Zeus hath his honors still,
Ye needs must know, and under oath I speak,
Unless ye find the maker of the tomb,
To bring him here before my very eyes,
No rest in death shall comfort you, until
With tortured limbs ye show your guiltiness,
That ye may know whence profit should be gained
And in your greedy gettings bear in mind,
That not from every source should gain be got;
For most of those who get their gains by craft
Receive no prize, and few receive no pangs.

GUARD. Still may I speak or shall I get me gone?

CREON. Be sure already thou art here too long.

GUARD. And do I trouble thee at heart or ear?

CREON. Why dost thou try to fix the place of trouble?

GUARD. The sinner hurt thy heart, I hurt thine ear.

CREON. Methinks in thee a wily knave was born.

GUARD. Tho' knave I be this guilt is none of mine.

CREON. This guilt is thine, who sold thy soul for hire.

GUARD. It seems too bad that what seems false seems true!

CREON. Thus polish up those "seeming" thoughts of thine,
 But shouldst thou fail to bring the culprit here
 Thou soon shalt know what trouble springs from greed.

[*Exit Creon.*]

GUARD. I hope above all things he may be found,
 But found or no—may fortune be the judge—
 You never more shall see me coming here.
 Alive beyond my hopes I've got away,
 So to my gods new gratitude must pay.

[*Exit Guard.*]

FIRST STASIMON.

STROPHE A.

Earth hath many wondrous things,
 Man surpasseth all the rest;
 Who, in his ship, like a gull on wings,
 Skims the stormy ocean's crest.
 The goddess Earth, untiring one,
 He tills—while years their cycles run—
 With plow and steed, as o'er the sod
 He guides the team that breaks the clod,
 Turning the glebe by the horse's breast.

ANTISTROPHE A.

Birds of air and beasts of field,
 Finny tribes of the briny seas—
 All beguiled by snares concealed—
 Leads he captive where he please.
 With wiles he traps the mountain bear
 Or drags the lion from his lair;
 The horse he yokes to pull his load
 And drives the oxen with his goad.
 In rule supreme o'er such as these.

STROPHE B.

All speech and airiness of thought,
And statutes of the social life,
Man's spirit to himself hath taught.
And, 'mid the elemental strife
Of hot and cold and wet and dry,
Hath all expedients to try.
Man, always ready for his fate,
Finds dark diseases he can stay;
And only at the Death-god's gate
The last disease he must obey!

ANTISTROPHE B.

Inventive power beyond all hope
Man has; but now to good he turns,
And now he brings within his scope
The bad. As good and bad he learns
He mingles with the laws god-sworn
The laws of earthly judgment born,
High in the state—without a state
Is he whose honor is disgrace.
May such men always rouse my hate,
Nor at my hearth find biding-place!

We're in doubt at the wonderful sight that we see,
For we know her and cannot deny her to be
The princess beloved, our Antigone.
Oh child of poor Oedipus, piteous thing!
Can it be it is thou that the sentinels bring,
Found foolish in scorning the laws of the king?

SECOND EPISODE.

Enter GUARD WITH ANTIGONE AS PRISONER.

GUARD. This girl is the one that did the sin. 'Tis she
We caught interring him. But where is the king?

CHORUS. He comes again from home in time of need.

Enter CREON.

CREON. What mean ye that I come in time of need?

GUARD. O king, by mortals nothing is to be
Abjured, for second thoughts belie one's plans.
I had declared that I would hardly come
Again, by reason of thy threats with which
My soul was shaken here. But yet, because
The joy that comes without its cherished hope
Is like no other joy, I come; although
I bound myself with oath. This maid I bring,
And her I found embellishing the tomb.
No lot was drawn this time; this task was mine,
And mine alone—a heavenly gift to me!
And now, O king, receive her as thou wilt.
Convict and judge the maiden—I go free;
By right released from crime and penalty!

CREON. Where caught, whence brought; hast thou the maiden
here?

GUARD. 'Twas she who buried the man; thou knowest all.

CREON. Dost know and truly speak that which thou sayest?

GUARD. I saw her burying the corpse forbidden.

There, I am clear and plain in what I say.

CREON. How? Was she seen and taken in the act?

GUARD. The deed was thus: Now, when we went, such threats
Of thine impending, carefully we swept
Away the dust which on the body lay
And stripped the clammy corpse, and then we sat
Upon the hillside, sheltered from the blasts
And far removed, for fear the body's stench
Should reach us; man with anger rousing man
With his abusive language, lest again
Some guard should prove neglectful of his watch.
At last the sun's round light in mid-sky stood
And heat intense poured down; then suddenly
A whirling gust—a heavenly curse—arose
From earth; it filled the plain and tortured all
The foliage of woody fields, and heaven

Was thick with storm. We crouched, with eyelids closed,
Beneath the heavenly plague; but when in time
At last the storm had passed us by,
The maid was seen — lamenting loud and shrill
With shrieks a bird pours forth in sorrow when,
Bereft of its brood, it sees the empty nest.
'Tis thus the maiden, when she saw the corpse
Unhonored by a tomb, began to mourn;
And bitterly she wailed, and prayed a curse
Of evil import on those men to fall
Whose deeds had brought about this state of things.
At once she sets to work, and quickly brings
The powdered dust, and from the rounded bowl
Of polished brass she pours it o'er the dead
Until libations threefold crown the corpse.
As thus we saw her, forth we rushed in haste
Intent on giving chase. She feared us not.
And now we claimed the proof that it was she
Who broke the laws before as well as now.
She stood in silence, nor did she resist;
Yet joy within my heart was not supreme,
For pleasant though it is that one himself
Escape the grip of law, yet joy itself
Grows dim at thought of bringing friends to grief.
However, safety was my first concern.

CREON. And what say'st thou, thou maid of downcast mien—
Denyest thou this charge of lawlessness?

ANTIGONE. The charge is true, and nothing I deny.

CREON. Thou, guard, may'st go where'er it suits thee best;
Released from blame and fear of penalty.
But thou, my maid, in fewest accents state
If thou had'st never heard my late decree.

ANTIGONE. I knew thy law. Why not? 'Twas plain enough.

CREON. What! Knowingly did'st dare transgress my will?

ANTIGONE. These laws were not proclaimed to me by Zeus,
Nor Justice, dwelling with the gods below;
Nor did I think that thou, who art a man
With only mortal powers, might dare assume
The right to override the eternal laws

Of gods divine—unwritten, yet secure;
Mandates that know nor now nor yesterday,
But live forevermore, and no man knows
What time they first appeared. I did not choose
For fear of man's decree in this affair
To risk the punishment the gods inflict.
I knew that I should die—why should I not--
If thou had'st never made decree of death.
And if to death I come before my time,
I count it only gain to die so soon;
For how should one, who, like myself, hath lived
Encompassed by an endless round of cares,
Not gain great profit in an early death?
If this young brother, from my mother sprung,
Were left a corpse unburied where he fell,
For that I should have suffered—not for this.
And, if I seem to you to act the fool,
Perhaps the fool is he who gives the name.

CHORUS. The spirit of the child is surely harsh;
Her father, though, before her, was as harsh.
She knows not how to yield to her misfortune.

CREON. But know that harshest spirits surely fall.
As thou wilt often see the hardest iron
Become a broken and a shattered mass
If forged in fire unto excessive hardness;
While horses of high mettle, I've observed,
By the petty bit are held restrained and curbed.
It is not right that one who is the slave
Of other rulers should trifle with proud thoughts.
She showed herself, by breaking statute laws,
To be a maid possessed of insolence;
And now to laugh and glory in her deeds
Is but a second insult to her lord.
In sooth, 'tis she who is the man, not I,
If she shall gain, unhurt, her victory.
No matter if she spring from mine own kin
Or of the nearest blood, I'll not allow
Her sister nor herself to make escape.
I charge this sister, too, with having plotted,

Along with the condemned, these funeral rites.
Then summon her; I saw her just within
The house, a-raving and beside herself.
The mind that plans, in secret, things unjust,
Is wont to be detected in its fault;
But more I hate the culprit who, when caught
In evil, tries to make a brave excuse.

ANTIGONE. Then take my life—what more dost thou require?

CREON. In this I have enough; so, nothing more.

ANTIGONE. If that's the case, then why dost thou delay?

There is no charm of sweetness in thy words,
Nor may they ever please my listening ear!
Nor canst thou ever love my utterance; and yet,
What greater glory can a mortal gain
Than having laid a brother in his tomb?
Did not the Chorus seal their tongues through fear,
They, too, would say the act I did was just.
Ye tyrants have a power unlimited
To do and say whatever ye shall wish.

CREON. Of all the Cadmean people gathered here

Thou art the only one who views it thus.

ANTIGONE. They also do, but curb their lips with fear.

CREON. This difference from them should cause thee shame.

ANTIGONE. There is no shame in honoring one's kin.

CREON. The other brother was thy brother too?

ANTIGONE. Our father and our mother were the same.

CREON. An impious honor thou dost give to him,—

ANTIGONE. The dead would never testify to that.

CREON. If he has equal honors with the bad.

ANTIGONE. 'Twas not a slave; but my own brother died.

CREON. In laying waste the land the other saved.

ANTIGONE. But Hades' laws treat all impartially.

CREON. The good and bad deserve no equal fate.

ANTIGONE. Who knows if this seem pious to the gods?

CREON. An enemy is not a friend when dead.

ANTIGONE. I cannot share in hatred but in love.

CREON. Then die. If thou must love, then love the dead.

I swear that while I live no woman rules.

Enter ISMENE.

CHORUS. Our Ismene is coming, behold! at the gate
She sheds tears in her grief at her sister's sad fate,
While the cloud on her brow, bedewing her face,
Dims the glow of her cheek from its beauteous grace.

CREON. Ah! thou, a snake within my house, hast lurked,
To suck unseen my blood. I did not know
I kept two pests to plot against my throne.
Confess that thou hast had thy guilty share
In this entombment; or dost thou deny?

ISMENE. I did the deed, if she will say I did,
And I, who shared, will bear the blame for it.

ANTIGONE. But Justice would not give consent to that;
'Twas not thy wish, nor would I take thine aid.

ISMENE. Yet in thine evils I am not ashamed
To travel with thee on thy sea of woe.

ANTIGONE. The gods below bear witness whose the deed.
I do not love a friend whose love is words.

ISMENE. However, deem me not unworthy now
To die with thee for honoring our dead.

ANTIGONE. Thou shalt not suffer death with me, nor count
The deed thine own; my death shall be enough.

ISMENE. What life holds happiness if thou art gone?

ANTIGONE. Ask Creon; thou wert mindful of his laws.

ISMENE. Why taunt me thus; thou gainest naught thereby.

ANTIGONE. I grieve in laughing, that I laugh at thee.

ISMENE. And wilt thou now accept my proffered aid?

ANTIGONE. Preserve thyself; thy freedom pleases me.

ISMENE. Alas, am I to fail of thy sad fate?

ANTIGONE. Yea. Life is thy choice; death will soon be mine.

ISMENE. Nay; there were thoughts of mine I left unsaid.

ANTIGONE. Thy choice hath pleased thee; I must please my gods.

ISMENE. And truly equal is the sin of each.

ANTIGONE. Take heart, for thou still livest; I have died
And long ago have passed to serve my dead.

CREON. These girls, I say, have seemed insane—the one
Of late, the other from her day of birth.

ISMENE. Not constant, king, does nature's gift of mind
Remain with those unfortunate,—but fails.

CREON. Fails thee, indeed, since thou hast chosen wrong.
 ISMENE. Why live, if I must lose my sister here?
 CREON. Say not "my sister here;" she's here no more.
 ISMENE. But canst thou slay the bride thy son hath wooed?
 CREON. There is another field where he may plough.
 ISMENE. But no such harmony as his and hers.
 CREON. I loathe these evil women for one's sons.
 ANTIGONE. Dear Haemon, how thy sire dishonors thee!
 CREON. Thou tirest me with all thy wedding talk!
 CHORUS. But wilt thou rob thy son of his betrothed?
 CREON. 'Tis Hades stops for me his marriage-feast.
 CHORUS. It seems to be decreed that she must die.
 CREON. It surely seemeth so to thee— and me.
 Delay no longer! Lead them both away!
 Henceforth these girls must not be left at large.
 For even the brave may try to run away
 When once they see the Death-god threaten them!
[Exeunt Antigone and Ismene under guard.]

SECOND STASIMON.

CHORAL SONG OF SIN AND HEREDITY.

STROPHE A.

Ah, blest is life to those who taste no ill!
 But he who once hath felt the wrath divine
 Doth leave his woe to children's children till
 Affliction's floods beset and undermine
 His race to come; as when the north winds blow
 And scud in stormy fury o'er the waves
 To roll the darkling sands of depths below
 In thunder on the smitten sea-coast caves.

ANTISTROPHE A.

We see the storied ruin of Laius' seed
 Succeed the ruin of the ancient dead,

Nor can the coming generation breed
 Release from ruin. Gods send woes instead;
 For when we thought the light that hope had made
 Upon the remnants of the race was nearing;—
 We see again the Hell-gods' bloody blade,
 For foolish hearts infatuate, appearing.

STROPHE B.

O Zeus, thy sovereign power supreme
 What force of man can over-ride,—
 That yieldeth not to sleep or dream
 But stretcheth wakefully and wide
 While running months may tireless fly?
 Thus agelessly while time goes by
 Thou dwellest in the Olympian light.
 In present, past, and future far
 This law will hold: *All sin will blight,*
And touch no life without its scar.

ANTISTROPHE B.

Though many men's sole hope is gain,
 Full many men's is but deceit,
 Who walk in sin and feel no pain
 Until the scorching sears the feet;
 For wisely did the poet say:
The greatest evil sometimes may
Seem noble when the gods sublime
Have marked the man they would destroy;
Then only for the shortest time
He liveth in his transient joy.

But behold, this is Haemon, thy son, whom we see
 Approaching. Thy youngest and dearest is he.
 He is here in keen grief for his bride soon-to-be—
 Unless fate shall steal from him his Antigone.

THIRD EPISODE.

Enter HAEMON.

CREON. We'll know him better than a prophet can.

My son, thou dost not come enraged or grieved

At a father's sentence on thy once-betrothed?

Am I not dear to thee whate'er I do?

HAEMON. O father, I am thine. Thou shalt direct

With tried experience while I obey.

No rightful marriage can exist for me

To follow rather than thy kindly lead.

CREON. Yea; thus, my boy 'tis right for thee to feel,

And hold thy father's will above all else.

It is for this men pray that loyal sons

Be born and reared for them within their homes

To bring an evil fate upon a foe,

But honor friendship as their fathers do.

If one begets a useless brood of sons,

What can we say of him but that he makes

A sorry laughing-stock for all his foes.

So never, child, cast down thy soul to love

For any woman's sake; for she, thou knowest,

Would prove a chilling object of embrace,—

A wicked woman in thy home! For what

Could give a deeper sore than friendship bad?

Now, loathing her as any hated thing,

Give up thy maid. In Hades let her wed,

Since her I caught alone of all the realm,

The one who manifestly disobeyed.

False to myself and State I shall not be,

But I will slay her; while she may invoke

Her Zeus of kindred; for, when I permit

Wrong deeds at home, I find them in the State;

Since one who is an upright man at home

Will prove a just man in the State, but he

Who in his own presumption breaks the laws

Or dares to dictate to his officers,—

Such man shall never meet with praise from me.
For whom the State sets up we should obey
In matters small and just, or great and wrong.
That man indeed I should be bold to think
Would rightly rule who could as well obey,
And he in storm of battle would remain
A comrade strong to fight and sure to stand.
Now, nothing is so bad as anarchy,
For she destroys the State, sets up revolt
At home, and causes routs in broken ranks
Of allied spears. But loyalty preserves
The lives of many men who keep their lines.

We shall defend the orders of the State,
Nor ever to a woman yield our rights.
If we must yield 'tis best to yield to men
And never call ourselves the slaves of women.

CHORUS. To us, unless we are deceived by age,

Thou seem'st to say in wisdom what thou sayest.

HAEMON. O father, gods to man have given mind

To be the best of all they've given him,
That what thou said'st thou didst not say aright
Is not within my power or will to say.

And yet it may be that some other man
Might have a goodly thought as well as thou.

Thou naturally canst not spy upon

The actions of our people, what they say

Or do, or blame; for awful is thine eye

To common men at any words they speak

Which would but vex thee if thou heardest them.

But I, beneath the cover of the dark,

Can hear how all the State bemoans this child:

That she is worthy least of all her kind

To die an evil death for glorious deeds;

'Twas she who would not let her brother lie

Without the sacred rights of burial,

Nor would she let him be destroyed by dogs

Or birds, when fallen by his brother's hand.

In golden honors, then, shall she not share?

Such speech spreads secretly throughout the town.

I keep thy good-success at heart, my sire,
And have no treasure of more worth to me;
For what rejoices more a child than when
His father have success in all his life?
Or can there come to man a greater joy
Than that his child should live in full success?
Let not thy single, stubborn thought be set
To think thy word is right and nothing else,
For he who thinks that he alone is wise
In speech and spirit as no other man—
Such men when scrutinized are empty shows!
It is not shameful for a man, though wise,
To learn his lessons!—nor be obstinate.
Thou mark'st as often as the trees bend low
Before the rushing mountain stream, they save
Their shoots and boughs; but trees which fight the blast
Are utterly destroyed in root and branch.
And so the boat, whose sheet is drawn too taut
And never giveth to the blast, must sail
Its journey through with timbers upside down.
So yield the point and moderate thy wrath,
For if from me can come a prudent thought,
Though I am young, I still would dare to say,
That he is best who in his nature knows
All knowledge; if his nature lacks of this—
And nature doth incline to such a lack—
Who learns from men of good advice is best!

CHORUS. O king, 'tis fit for thee to heed thy son
If truth he speaks in season; and for him
To heed his sire, for each hath spoken well.

CREON. Shall we, indeed, who are so old, be taught
To think, forsooth, by one so young as he?

HAEMON. Not if I'm wrong. If I am young, my facts,
Rather than years, thy study should receive.

CREON. Is this thy "fact," that lawless men are honored?

HAEMON. I would not urge respect for wickedness.

CREON. And has she not been caught by sin's disease?

HAEMON. Her fellow-citizens of Thebes say not.

CREON. And shall my city say what I must do?

HAEMON. Now like a youth thou speakest; dost thou see?

CREON. Ought I to rule for others' gain or mine?

HAEMON. There is no city which one man may own.

CREON. Is not the city his who holds the power?

HAEMON. Fine monarch thou wouldst be for desert lands!

CREON. This man, it seems, doth help a woman's fight.

HAEMON. If thou a woman art—I seek thy gain.

CREON. O basest son; contending with thy sire!

HAEMON. 'Tis true, for I preceive that thou dost err.

CREON. And do I err when I revere my rule?

HAEMON. Thou art not reverent; thou scornest God.

CREON. O foul and brutal soul, thou woman's slave!

HAEMON. At least thou wouldst not find me slave to shame.

CREON. Thine every word is said in her behalf.

HAEMON. For thee, myself, and the gods of future life!

CREON. In this life thou shalt never marry her.

HAEMON. She dies; but in her death another falls!

CREON. And dost thou thus come out in open threat?

HAEMON. What threat is this—to check a fool's desire?

CREON. To thy sorrow thou mayst order me, thou fool!

HAEMON. Then dost thou wish to talk and not to hear?

CREON. Thou woman's slave, stop chattering to me.

HAEMON. If thou wert not my sire, I'd call thee mad.

CREON. Indeed, but, by Olympus, be assured

With joy thou shalt not heap abuse on me.

Lead forth the hateful thing, that in his sight

The girl may die, and with her bridegroom near.

HAEMON. Nay, not while I am near—count not on that—

She shall not die before mine eyes; and thou

Shalt see me never, though thou seekest me, -

But rage 'mid other friends who like thy words!

[*Exit Haemon.*]

CHORUS. The man, O king, in passion swift hath gone;

And angry souls are desperate in youth.

CREON. Well, let him do his worst, and let him feel

That he is more than man! Yet, none the less

The maidens shall not find escape from death.

CHORUS. What! both? And canst thou plan to kill them both?

CREON. Not her who did no ill—I now recall.

CHORUS. And how dost thou intend to kill the maid?

CREON. I'll lead her by a path which men avoid,

And hide her in a rocky cave alive,
And there before her I will place such food
As conscience may demand, and only such
As frees the city from the chance of plague.
And there, beseeching Hades, whom alone
Of gods she worships, she shall find her lot
To be escape from death, no doubt, or learn
At last the ample toil of Hades' rites.

THIRD STASIMON.

CHORAL SONG OF THE POWER OF LOVE.

STROPHE A.

Almighty Love, unstayed in fight
Thou chargest on the prey thou winnest,
Or on the maiden's cheek at night
Dost softly rest, till thou beginnest
Thy travel o'er the briny sea,
Or where the rustic's shepherd-bower
Finds god nor man escaping thee,—
For all go mad beneath thy power!

ANTISTROPHE A.

And thou dost change the human heart,
And righteous men to ruin flingest,
As here new kinsmen's wranglings start
In the family bitterness thou bringest.
The power of the eye with the lover's light
Is as great as the strength which the Law doth measure
For divine Aphrodite, unmatched in might,
Thus plays upon us at her pleasure.

But now are we beside ourselves in fears,
And cannot stay the fountains of our tears,

For, behold! on her way to the pitiless tomb
Where Death waits us all in his slumberous room
Antigone meeteth her hurrying doom.

FOURTH EPISODE.

Enter ANTIGONE.

ANTIGONE. My countrymen, witness my sorrowful plight
As the last weary road of my journey I tread,
Looking long at the rays of the beauteous light
I shall see nevermore in the realms of the dead.
For Hades, who putteth each mortal to rest,
Thus leads me alive to his Acheron's side;
Unwedded I go where no bride-songs invest
The sorrowful passing of Death's wretched bride.

CHORUS. But great is the honor and glory to gain
As alive thou shalt pass to the dead men's domain,
With disease never racking thy body with pain,
Nor obliged with a weapon thy life-blood to shed,—
For of all mortal beings, thou only art led,
Still living, to enter the world of the dead.

ANTIGONE. I have heard how once Niobe met with her fate,
Turned to stone on the height of Mount Sipylus gray,
Where, as ivy, the rigid rock bindeth her strait,
And the rains, as she weakens, still wear her away.
Where the snow never leaves her, 'tis said, but the dew
From her all-tearful eyes trickles down on her breast;
So the gods have doomed me as a Niobe too
In the rock's hard embrace, where they lull me to rest.

CHORUS. But she was a goddess,—divine was her birth;
While we are but mortals, and creatures of earth.
So thy fame shall be great if thou come to Death's door
By the way that a goddess hath entered before.

ANTIGONE. Ah me, I'm mocked! By all our father's gods, I pray
Insult me not before you, ere I pass away!
Alas, dear land of mine and happy men that dwell
By the fountain-heads of Dirce's stream
'Mid Theban groves where chariots gleam!
On you I call, to be my witnesses, to tell
How unjust laws have sent me down in bonds to tread
My way alone to the dreadful cave
That waits to be the house and grave
Of a stranger homeless 'mid the living and the dead.

CHORUS. Advancing to the last extremes
Of boldness, thou hast fallen hard
Against the throne where Justice seems
To lay on thee as thy reward
The sins of Oedipus, ill-starred.

ANTIGONE. Alas, ye bring a memory up that pains me so!
To hear the thrice-told telling of my father's woe
And of our sorrowful and proud Labdacidae.
My mother's shocking wedlock made
Her son her husband! There is laid
The gloom of such a marriage heavily on me.
Of such a wretched pair as they came I, to whom
I journey now, alone, unwed—
For Polynices' marriage bed
And sin have sent me down with him to meet my doom!

CHORUS. Thy reverence is a holiness,
But should not contradict the rule
Of him to whom the realms confess
The powers of State. Thou art a fool
To choose the moods of ruin's stress!

ANTIGONE. Unsorrowsed for, unloved, unwed,
Along this dreary road I'm led;
No longer shall the sun,
The sacred eye of Zeus's day,
Shine down on me with pitying ray—
My fate unwept for—done.

CREON. Do ye believe from wailings one would cease
If she might thus prolong them ere her death?
Will ye not drag the girl to burial
Within the cavern as commanded you?
Then leave her there alone, away from friends,
To live or die within that rock entombed,
While we, in this girl's fate, go free from blame.
But she shall never share our homes above.

ANTIGONE. To thee I go, oh tomb—deep-dug abode,
And bridal chamber, everlasting home—
Long years before the time allotted me;
I go unto mine own, the most of whom
The Death-queen long hath ranked among her dead.
The last and far most miserable am I!
This thought I cherish still within my hopes:
That I shall meet thee, father, loved of thee;
And mother, loved of thee; and brother—thee!
This hand of mine did deck and bathe you, parents,
In death and gave libations at your graves;
And now, oh Polynices, this reward
I win because I buried thy dead self;
Yet nobly, think the wise, I honored thee.
Upon myself I'd not have taken this task
That I have taken, if a child had died
Or any father of a child of mine!
You ask with what intent I reason thus?
When husbands die, another may be had,
And were a child to die, another child;—
Another brother never can I have,
With both my parents in the other world.
So this, I say, is why I honored thee
Before all others, brother. To the king
I seem to err and be too bold therein.
And now he, seizing me within his power,
Is bearing me away in maidenhood,
To know nor bridal-song nor motherhood!
Deserted by my friends, ill-fated girl,
I go alive among the deep-dug tombs—
In violation of what law divine?

Alas! what need that I, unhappy girl,
 Should front the gods and pray to them for aid?
 My piety hath won an impious fate!
 If the gods regard it right, I would confess
 When taught by woe, that what I did was wrong.
 If Creon's ways are wrong, my prayer is this:
 May woes upon him come, no more than mine.

CHORUS. The self-same storm in her soul prevails
 To vex her still with its same wild gales.

CREON. Ho, ye guards who conduct her, ye lead her too slow
 And shall pay for your slowness in tears, ye may know!

ANTIGONE. Alas! that is almost my sentence of doom.

CHORUS. We cannot console thee, nor dare we presume
 On a longer delay in thy march to the tomb.

ANTIGONE. O Thebes, thou town of our fathers' story!
 O gods ancestral of ancient glory!
 I pass—no longer am soon to pass—
 O Princes of Thebes, behold ye—alas!
 'Tis the only heir of your royal line.
 Behold ye what torture and insult are mine
 Because I have honored the honors divine.

[*Exeunt.*]

FOURTH STASIMON.

CHORAL SONG OF FAMOUS IMPRISONMENTS.

STROPHE A.

Thus Danae was doomed,
 Apart from day's high light,
 Within brass walls entombed
 To live in deathlike night.
 Thus buried in her grave
 She hid in darkness wretchedly.

She too,—O child, be brave!—
 Was royal in her race
 And won from Zeus rich grace
 As mother of his progeny;
 Yet awful is the weight
 And mystery of Fate!
 Nor wealth, nor famous warriors' arms,
 Nor black and sea-tossed ships, nor charms
 Of magic towers can save us from its harms.

ANTISTROPHE A.

Lycurgus, king of Thrace,
 With temper unrestrained
 To mocking wrath gave place.
 Him, Dionysus chained
 Upon a rocky crag.
 For thus doth fury ooze away
 Where fiery spirits flag.
 But madness having passed
 He realized at last
 That one must not a god gainsay,
 Nor higher powers wrong;
 For he had checked the throng
 Of Bacchic maids from waving brands
 And revelling in choral bands,
 And roused the muses by his harsh demands.

STROPHE B.

Beside the double rocks of the wild Cyanean strands
 There stand Bosporean crags of the hostile Thracian lands,
 And near the city walls
 Are Ares' temple-halls,
 That saw the cursed crime of fierce and bloody hands,
 When Phineus' sons were smitten and lost their blinded eyes
 For the spite of the cruel wife, who, heeding not their cries,
 With shuttles pierced them, bringing vengeance from the skies.

ANTISTROPHE B.

They wasted away in grief and they mourned the wretched lot
Of their mother who was wedded, alas,—but wedded not!

For she was high in place

And sprung of ancient race,

And reared in caverns deep,—whom Boreas begot

As sister of the winds, the child of the Divine,

And fleet as any deer the mountain glens confine,—

Yet she, O child, endured the lot the Fates assign.

FIFTH EPISODE.

Enter THE BLIND PROPHET TIRESIAS WITH HIS GUIDE.

TIRESIAS. O princely men of Thebes, we two have come

Together, seeing by the eyes of one;

For with a guide the blind must find his way.

CREON. Thou reverend Tiresias, what news?

TIRESIAS. Soon shall I tell; and thou, obey thy seer.

CREON. I have not scorned thy judgment heretofore,—

TIRESIAS. And therefore thou dost guide this city straight.

CREON. My past bears witness to thy usefulness.

TIRESIAS. Then think! thou standest on the brink of chance!

CREON. What is it? How I shudder at thy words!

TIRESIAS. When thou hast heard the omens of mine art,

Then shalt thou know. For, sitting in my chair,

My ancient observation-seat, where fowls

Of every kind were wont to come, I heard

Strange sounds of birds with wild and frenzied screams.

I knew they were engaged in bloody fight—

Their talons tearing in each other's flesh;

For not without portent that whirl of wings!

And straight in fear I tried the sacrifice

Upon the blazing altars. There no fire

From off our sacred offerings would gleam,

But on the ashes oozed the melted thighs.

They smoked and sputtered, and the galls flew high

To scatter broadcast in the air. The thighs

Were melted down and all the bones exposed.
 Such omens did this boy make known to me,—
 The prophecy of failing sacrifice.
 To me this lad is guide,—to others, I.

A plague from thee infests our city thus,
 For all our altars and our household shrines
 The flesh of Oedipus' ill-fated son
 Doth fill with mangled food of birds and dogs.
 Besides, no longer do the gods accept
 Our offerings and flames of burning thighs,
 Nor do the cries of birds bring clear portent,—
 Too sated they with dead men's fat and blood.

Then think of this, my son: to err in sin
 Is something common to the race of men.
 But he no longer is a foolish wretch
 Who, after he has sinned and fallen low,
 Receives his cure and is not obstinate;
 But stubbornness is blamed as foolishness.
 So yield thou to the dead, nor sting again
 The slain. What feat to kill again the fallen?
 I speak with kindly thoughts for thee. 'Tis sweet
 To learn from him who speaketh for thy gain.

CREON. Old man, ye all like bowmen fling at me
 Your darts, nor am I unassailed by prophecy.
 By your prophetic tribe have I been sold
 And trafficked with as so much merchandise.
 Yea, barter on for Sardis' boundless wealth,
 And, if you please, for India's yellow gold;
 But HIM ye shall not bury in a tomb,—
 Not if the birds of Zeus may wish to snatch
 And carry him for food to Zeus's throne!
 Not then will I in dread of that foul stench
 Consent to bury him, for well I know
 A man hath not the power to taint the gods.

But naughtiest mortals sink to depths profound,
 Who finely mouth fine words to win them gain.

TIRESIAS. Does anyone of mankind know or heed—

CREON. What's this? What kind of common place is this?

TIRESIAS. How far good counsel is the best of goods?

CREON. So far, methinks, as folly is the worst.

TIRESIAS. Thou surely grow'st infected with that plague.

CREON. I do not care to bandy words with thee.

TIRESIAS. And yet thou sayest I have spoken false.

CREON. For seers are all a profit-loving set.

TIRESIAS. The set of tyrants loves a baser gain.

CREON. Know'st thou, that thou art talking to thy rulers?

TIRESIAS. I know it; thou, through me, hast saved thy State.

CREON. Thou art a clever seer, but lov'st injustice.

TIRESIAS. Thou bringest me to speak what's on my mind.

CREON. Then speak it! Only, speak it not for gain.

TIRESIAS. Methinks it will not be for gain of thine!

CREON. Yet know thou shalt not trade upon my will.

TIRESIAS. Then be thou well assured that thou shalt yet

Complete few rivalling courses of the sun,
Before thou shalt repay from thine own bowels
One dead in recompense for others dead,
For thou hast sent a living soul below
And made her home unhonored in the tomb;
While thou hast kept above from Hades' realms
A corpse deprived of proper funeral rites.
Such interference is no right of thine
Nor of the gods above. Herein thy sin!
For this, shall late-destroying Murderers
Of hell and Furies of the gods await
To wreak on thee these self-same penalties.

Mark if I prophecy induced by pay,
For after no long time there shall be heard
The cries of men and women in thy halls
And all the States be turbulent with strife,
Whose heroes' mangled bodies either dogs
Or beasts or winged birds have cleansed
And brought their impure stench to the sacred hearths.
At thee, because thou painest me, I shoot,
As an archer, in the anger of my soul,
Such darts, and thou shalt not escape their sting.

Come, boy, thou mayst escort me home again,
That he may vent his wrath on younger men

Or later learn to have a gentler tongue
And feelings better than he keeps to-day!

[*Exit Tiresias and Guide.*]

CHORUS. Oh king, the man of awful prophecies is gone.

But we have learned to know—the while our locks
Have changed from youthful black to aged gray—
This prophet never spoke the city false.

CREON. I know it, too; my heart is in distress.

To yield is base, but bad it seems to smite
My soul with mischief by resisting him.

CHORUS. Thou oughtest take good thought, Menoeceus' son.

CREON. Advise me what to do. I will obey.

CHORUS. Go, free the maiden from the cell, and next

Proceed to bury him who lies exposed.

CREON. Do ye advise me this,—and ought I yield?

CHORUS. As soon as possible, my lord. The Furies

Cut very short the evil paths of men.

CREON. Alas! 'Tis hard to do—but yet—I yield,

For one must not engage in strife with Fate.

CHORUS. Go—do the deed! Entrust it to no other.

CREON. Just as I am, I go. Proceed, my men,

From here or elsewhere, taking in your hands

Your axes, and approach the noted place,

Since my opinion hath at last been changed;

As I did bind her, I will let her free.

I fear it be the best to close my days

With ancient laws of burial rites revered.

HYPORCHEMA.

GLAD CHORAL SONG IN HONOR OF BACCHUS.

STROPHE A.

Many thy names, O Bacchus, Joy of the Theban maids,
Son of the god of Thunder, Lord of Icarian glades,
Reigning in vales of Eleusis where stands Demeter's shrine,
O Bacchus! Bacchus! Bacchus! the god of the flowing wine,

In Thebes thou dwellest where Ismenus's waters speed
In the merry, storied country of the savage Dragon's seed.

ANTISTROPHE A.

Far over the steeps that Parnassus uplifts in double height
The lurid gleam of the torchlights illumines thee at night,
When nymphs from Corycian caverns go marching, Bacchus,
for thee,
And the springs of Castalia's fountains start upward, thy glory
to see.
From over the hills of Nysa, where green are the ivied banks,
They hallow thy path to the city with the shouts of their Maenad
ranks!

STROPHE B.

Thou, Bacchus, honorest Thebes above
All cities for thy mother-love.
'Twas here the lightning struck her down,
So here, since plagues afflict our town,
From thy Parnassian heights descending,
Toward us thy healing footsteps bending,
Oh Bacchus, come!

ANTISTROPHE B.

Ho! Leader of the fiery routs
Of dancing stars! With all-night shouts
Appear! Thou son of Zeus, appear!
Oh king, with thy Bacchants draw near
While they in frenzied chorus raise
Their nightly songs and chant thy praise:
Oh Bacchus, come!

EXODOS.

Enter A MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. O men of Cadmus' and Amphion's town.
There is no life, whatever be its state,

That I should ever dare to praise or blame;
 For Chance abaseth and exalteth men.
 To Chance are subject happiness and ill.
 No seer can tell the destined fates of souls.

Of Creon I was ever envious,
 Because he saved from foes the Theban land,
 Received the power, and made himself supreme,—
 Still blest with happiness of noble sons.
 Now all is lost; for when a man gives up
 The joys of life, he loses life itself.
 Surround the man, suppose, with worlds of wealth
 To live in lordly state; yet if deprived
 Of joy I would not buy his wealth and pomp;
 In-lieu of pleasure, for the shadow of smoke.

CHORUS. What new distress of kings art come to tell?

MESSANGER. Of the dead—and the living guilty of the dead.

CHORUS. But who the slayer? Who the slain? Pray tell.

MESSANGER. The prince; the very hand is red with blood.

CHORUS. Whose hand is red—the father's or the son's?

MESSANGER. By his own hand Prince Haemon slew himself

In anger at the crime his father caused.

CHORUS. How closely, seer, thy prophecy is fulfilled!

MESSANGER. 'Tis so. But now the future claims our thought.

CHORUS. And lo, here comes the queen Eurydice,

The wretched wife of Creon, from her home
 To mourn her son. Or is she here by chance?

Enter EURYDICE.

EURYDICE. My citizens, I overheard your words

While I was coming to my outer gates

To pray at Pallas' altar in the court.

But when I started to unbolt the door

One awful word of evil struck my ears,

And I fell fainting in my servants' arms.

What was that word? Tell me again. For I

Will listen; not unversed in misery.

MESSANGER. I, gracious queen, a witness, will relate

The tale, and slight no portion of the truth;

For why should I, to soften actual things

Say that which later must appear deceit?
To tell the truth is always safe and straight.

I went as an attendant with thy lord.
We reached, at length, the rolling lowland's crest
Where lay neglected still and torn by dogs,
The corpse of Polynices. We besought
The Cross-Roads-God and Hades to restrain
Their wrath, and once again propitious be.
We first in holy water washed the corpse;
Then cloaked it for the tomb with fresh-hewn boughs,
And heaped its burial mound of native earth.
Then straight we started for the hollow cave,—
The maiden's tomb and Hades' bridal hall.

While yet afar, a servant hears a sound
Of wailings shrill from that unhallowed tomb,
And goes and tells it to his lord, the king.
Then, indistinct, as Creon nearer creeps,
A cry of dire distress assails his ear.
With doleful shriek, he wails in sad lament:
"Wretch that I am! Doth my prophetic sense
Declare I travel now the banefulest
Of all the roads my foot hath ever trod?
My son's voice strikes me. Go, my slaves; make haste!
Go near the tomb and at its doorway look
And see if this is Haemon's voice I hear,
Or if it be that by my gods I'm duped!"

We went, obedient to our king's command,
And there within the cave's remotest room
We saw the maiden hanging by the neck—
A strip of cloth her suicidal noose.
There, too, with clinging arms in wrapt embrace,
Was Haemon, bending fondly by her corpse,
Lamenting wedlock found in death alone,—
His father's deed, and his unhappy bride.
But Creon, when he saw the prince, his son,
Cried out in anguish, rushed across the cave
And called his son in accents of distress:
"O suffering boy! What crime hath stained thy hand?
What dreadful purpose now hath filled thy mind?"

In what dire death dost thou destroy thyself?
 Come forth, my son, come forth; I beg thee, come!"
 With spurning on his face the son glares wild.
 No answer comes, but quick the knife is drawn!
 He springs in vain;—the sire avoids the blow!
 The youth, in bitter anger, drives the sword
 Upon himself—the point within his heart.
 Though fainting, he has life to clasp the maid,
 But pants and spurts a sudden dash of blood
 Whose drops make red the damsel's cheek of white.
 Dead, with the dead, he finds in Hades' halls
 His marriage rites accomplished in his death,
 And proves a man's unreasonableness to be
 By far the greatest harm that comes to man.

[*Exit Eurydice.*]

CHORUS. What can it mean? The queen has disappeared
 And left unsaid her hopes or her despair.

MESSANGER. I shrink with fear, yet feed on future hopes
 That she will hide her grief from public sight
 And give to household slaves the task of wailing,—
 Far too discreet to mar propriety.

CHORUS. We little know. This stillness is a weight
 As heavy as were cries that rise in vain.

MESSANGER. Let us discover, entering the palace.
 A broken heart may have some secret hid.
 Ye tell the truth—great silence has its weight!

Enter CREON WITH HIS SON'S BODY.

CHORUS. But see, 'tis the king; and his sorrow appears
 In the burden he bears on his arms as he nears,
 While we venture to say that the sin was his own
 And the penalty his. He must bear it alone.

CREON. The dire, dire mistakes of lives wrong in soul
 Are hard, deadly hard. Ah who shall console
 The two—one in blood—the slayer, the slain?
 Alas, why had I my purposes vain?
 My boy, oh my boy, too young, young to die,—
 Art gone—dead and gone. Who killed thee? 'Twas I.

CHORUS. At last, perhaps too late, thou seest the truth.

CREON. Ah me!

By pain taught am I, for hard on my brow
A god struck me then and gods drive me now
On paths shaking wildly. Woe! Woe! Under feet
Is joy trodden down, and Man's pangs complete.

PALACE MESSENGER. O master, how thou seem'st to have and hold
All troubles. Some thou bear'st within thine arms
And others thou shalt see within thy home.

CREON. What more of trouble can there be than this?

MESSENGER. Thy wife is dead, the mother of this corse,
By wounds but fresh inflicted, hapless one!

CREON. Alas!

Ah, why ruin me, ye harsh ports of Hell?
Thou hard messenger, what tale canst thou tell?
Again thou hast slain a man ready slain.
What, slave, sayest thou? What news can remain?
Ah woe! Ah woe!
Must new blood and death involve us again?

MESSENGER. Thou mayst behold. The body is not hidden.

CREON. Woe! Woe!

This other horror I behold—ah wretched man!
What fate still is mine? What griefs still await?
Poor soul that I am! My dead son is here,
While yonder my wife in death doth appear—
A queen and her son to commiserate.

MESSENGER. Beside the altar, on a sword she fell,
While faintly, with a darkness at her eyes,
She wailed for Megareus, her long lost son,
And wailed again for Haemon's wedding day;
But last of all called down a baleful curse
On thee, as slayer of her son and thine.

CREON. Alas! and alas!

I quake in my fright. Will none smite me down
With sharp spear-point blow?
My own sorry self must win high renown
Of sorriest woe.

MESSENGER. Thy wife, as she was dying, said of thee
That thou wert guilty of the deaths of two.

CREON. Thou sayest she is dead. How came her end?

MESSENGER. Her own hand struck the fatal blow because
She learned the wailful suffering of her son.

CREON. Oh me! Oh me!
Ah me! none but I the dread blame shall share;
'Twas I killed my wife, and I am to bear
The true charge of crime. Ho! My retinue there,
Here! Lead me away. Be quick! Lead, I say.
I count me no more than—naught. Lead away!

CHORUS. 'Tis right, if aught is right in times like this.
Trouble at hand is best when briefest borne.

CREON. Let it come! Let it come!
Yea, come, happiest day that brings death's release,
Yea, come, last of days when days' suns shall cease.
Let it come! Let it come!

CHORUS. Think not of ends to come. Thou hast enough
For present care, and death is Fate's concern.

CREON. This prayer for death is all my single prayer.

CHORUS. Then pray no prayers at all, for Fate's decrees
Are fixed inevitable for mortal men.

CREON. Away! Lead away this vain man of guilt
Who slew thee, my son, and unwitting spilt
The blood of a wife. Ah, pitiful me!
For where can I look and what can I see?

My world's out of joint; for heavy hath come
The stroke on my brow of unbearable doom.

CHORUS. Ah, by far the best boon that good fortune can send
Is the WISDOM that saveth and maketh us bend
To the fear of the gods. But the arrogant speech
Of the boaster awaiteth by penance to teach
The WISDOM the aged learn hard at the end.



